The Influence of Dual Language Program on Social Relationships

Education 7201: Seminar in Applied Theory and Research

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**Abstract**

**Introduction**

The number of immigrant students entering the United States continues to grow, almost all of which are English Language Learner (ELL) students. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics show that the number of school-age children who spoke a language other than English reached almost 10 million in 2004 (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008). These ELL students have clustered in major metropolitan areas, including this one, New York City. According to the NYC Department of Education, about 14.3% of the cities students are ELL’s, and that number has been slowly increasing year to year. This cultural and linguistic diversity of students presents a challenge to educators in both providing sufficient language skills, as well as teaching the standard material. A relatively new program called Dual Language Immersion has been integrated into classrooms with the intent of addressing these two problems.

Dual Language Programs (DLP), also known as two-way immersion, integrates English language learners from a common native language background and native English-speaking students in the same classroom for academic instruction through both languages (Lindholm-Leary, 2012). In immersion or dual-language programs, children learn all or at least half of their subjects in the second language (Stewart, 2005).

The number of immigrant ELL students has been increasing in recent years. Classrooms have also become more diverse. In public school’s student’s racial enrollment is now no-majority. Diverse classrooms lead to diverse cultures and diverse languages, which in turn puts pressure on educators to meet the needs of today’s diverse classroom. DLP’s have shown to be effective methods of instruction for teaching kids to be bilingual. The purpose of this research is to improve and measure social relationships among ELL and non-ELL students in a diverse setting.

**Statement of the Problem**

In PS X a general 1st grade classroom consists of English only students and ELL Chinese students. The problem is these two groups of students are separated by language. During team activities they prefer being arranged with others from their language group.  The problem is mainly a language barrier (Case, 2015).

**Literature Review**

**The Pros**

A dual language program not only can meet all students’ academic performance, but also promote positive attitudes toward both languages and cultures (Christian, 1996; Thomas & Collier, 1998; Lindholm-Leary, 2012; Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008). Dual language learners are learning two languages at the same time; they learn to speak their native language at home while learning the second language at school (Kelly, 2015). The second language is used as a vehicle for communication and instruction in those classes rather than viewed as a separate subject (Stewart, 2005). In a growing number of schools in the U.S., students are learning through two languages in programs that aim to develop dual language proficiency along with academic achievement (Christian, 1996). Dual language programs have become more popular in the United States because not only ELL students receive a benefit from it, but native English speaking students also gain a bilingual ability. Native English speakers in these programs, despite learning through two languages, excel in their native English, scoring higher than peers studying only in English (Thomas & Collier, 2003).

The objective of dual language programs is to emphasize both languages and cultures equally (Cortina, Makar, & Mount-Cors, 2015). The dual language program provides an atmosphere that allows students to acquire a second language and learn about another culture without sacrificing their individual identities (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008).

Dual immersion language programs provide students two languages in the classroom. Aside from learning a second language, the primary benefit of immersion is in the student’s mind, in their way of thinking. Bilingual children are better at creative thinking, also called divergent thinking. They tend to find solutions to more original problems and have metalinguistic awareness, which is an understanding of language and how language functions. It can also increase students’ memory and listening skills (Thomas & Collier, 1997; Lindholm-Leary, 2012; Carstens, 2015; Christian, 1996).

Two-way dual language (DL) programs in the United States typically bring together native speakers of a target language and native speakers of English for academic instruction that occurs through both languages (Lindholm-Leary, 2016). Younger children are more receptive to language learning and develop a more native-like pronunciation when second language learning begins before the onset of adolescence (Stewart, 2005). Two-way programs typically share the goals of bilingual proficiency, academic achievement, and positive cross cultural attitudes and behaviors, but they vary a good deal in the approaches and strategies they use to work toward those goals (Christian, 1996).

Dual language immersion provides instruction in the primary language for minority students. These students can, therefore, begin their academic work in a language they already speak and understand (Valdes, 1997). Students from foreign countries can immediately learn math, science and other subjects without learning English first. They will have less academic delay, and feel more comfortable in the dual language program classroom.

**The Cons**

Dual language programs have been popular in the United States, however, there are still some challenges needed to be considered. Most challenges of immersion teaching are related to unique and local contexts. Most of what is known about dual language programs comes from researchers who have studied French immersion programs in Canada, and Spanish immersion programs in the United States (Lindholm‐ Leary, 2001).

According to Lao (2004), there are not enough dual language textbooks and teaching materials to support this program. The lack of dual language books largely influences the effectiveness of the language program. Some schools, at their own cost, have translated teaching materials and books to the state criteria. With or without the need to translate teaching materials, the cost of dual language immersion is high relative to traditional teaching methods due to its intricacy and complexity.

For educator’s dual language programs lack explicit methods of instruction with regards to the foreign language curriculum. This leads to poor practices, such as the teacher may be tempted to code switch for “important” information, like announcements and directions (Montague & Meza-Zaragosa, 1999). Teachers are one of the key factors in a dual language program. The teacher’s delivery of information or instruction can either be a hurdle or a clear path to student success (Buttaro, 2009). Teachers are in a position to illuminate the issues of immersion schooling as we attempt to define best practice (Walker & Tedick, 2000). Currently, there is a lack of qualified dual language teachers. Dual language teachers have to be good at both languages. Lack of qualitied teachers and right teaching methods add additional challenges to the program.

According to Valdes (1997) and Lindolm-Leary (2012), students in a dual language program might score lower on standardized academic performance tests in the first several school years. Studies show that 5 to 7 years may be necessary for ELLs to close the gap between their test scores and those of their peers (Lindholm-Leary, 2012). Dual language programs always require a minimum of six years of bilingual instruction (Thomas & Collier, 2003). As stated under “Pros”, dual language learning leads to better test scores for students, but this is only after completion of the program. In general, dual language programs are more expensive and take a longer time to see results than other language programs. It is difficult to change those factors.

Dual language programs do not solve the problem of social inequality. Anglophone students are chosen to be there, and can leave at any time, whereas the foreign language students are required to participate due to their ELL status (Valdes, 1997).

**Mandarin-English Dual Language Program**

With China’s increasingly important role in the world economy, there has been a dramatic increase in interest in the study of Chinese in the United States (Padilla, Fan, Xu, & Silva, 2013). The number of United States Mandarin immersion schools increased five-fold between 2006 and 2013, from 24 schools in 2006 to 129 schools in 2013 (Carstens, 2015). In New York City there are many Chinese students who either don’t speak English or at minimum don’t speak English at home. New York City is home to the largest Chinese population in the country. This makes for a large number of Chinese ELL students.

In addition, many parents to American-born students also want their children to be bilingual. Chinese has become a popular second language choice. In order to achieve higher language performance among students, educators promote different teaching methods inside and outside of schools.

Bilingual books are often considered an important aid for dual language programs. Educational success of children acquiring the extensive vocabulary and complex structures of language are more readily encountered in books than in social conversation (Sneddon, 2008). However, there is a lack of Chinese Children’s books in both the Chinese and English-dominant families. A majority of Chinese and English-dominant parents reported that their children possessed no more than 20 titles of Chinese children’s books (Lao, 2004).

**Social Relationship**

Language permeates most all of social life. Language is everything. The use of language is key for students to interact with their peers in the classroom. A lack of English language skills among immigrant students might lead to struggles when attempting to socially interact with English-Speaking peers. Cultivating interaction among ELL’s and their non-ELL peers remains a desirable, yet often elusive, goal (Case, 2015). Learning and speaking more than one language is clearly within the bounds of the human language capacity (Person, 2007). Implementing a dual language program with ELL students and native English students will be a benefit in both languages and cultures. As educators, it is important to use effective strategies to improve students’ social relationships in class.

In general, new immigrant students are less engaged in classes. Culture differences and language challenges are the main factors that prevent them from participating in class. Shifting participation structures to incorporate technology and multiple instruction models provide opportunities for immigrant students to become more visible in the classroom (Schultz & Coleman-King, 2012). It is critical for immigrant students to retain their identity while also being more accepted by English-Speaking students.

Role play is a speaking activity. It can be classified as one of the communicative methods of foreign language learning. This activity provides students with more opportunities to "act" and "interact" with friends and classmates in the either the English language or the target language (Chauhan, 2015).

Language brokering is the act of interpreting and translating between culturally and linguistically different speakers. Dual immersion programs require students to take on the role of the broker, thereby, enabling students to renegotiate and reposition their public student identities (Sook, Hill-Bonnet, & Raley, 2011). Dual language programs promote increased involvement and interaction among people of differing cultures. It also provides an atmosphere that allows students to acquire a second language and learn about another culture without sacrificing their individual identities (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008).

Through dual language programs, immigrant students will be encouraged to keep their heritage as part of their self-identity. While students were becoming proficient in two languages, they were also creating their identities and beginning to understand issues of language and society and formulating ideologies (Lopez, 2011). Children spend increasing amounts of time with peers which requires them to master many new cognitive and social skills for successful peer interactions (Hebert-Myers, Guttentag, Swank, Smith, & Landry, 2006). Dual language immersion programs bring children from two different language groups together (Valdes, 1997).

**Theorists**

Kathryn Lindholm-Learyis currently a Professor Emerita of Child and Adolescent Development at San Jose State University. She has received a variety of awards for her teaching and research on two-way programs. She has published many books and journal articles regarding dual language immersion. She believes the goals of dual language are to promote bilingualism and biliteracy, academic achievement at or above grade level, and cross-cultural competence for all students (Lindholm-Leary, 2016). The two major current classroom dual language models are 90:10 and 50:50 (Lindholm-Leary, 2012, 2016; Gomez, Y. Freeman, & D. Freeman, 2005; Montague, 1997; Thomas & Collier, 1998; Gomez et al., 2005; Buttaro, 2009; Valdes, 1997)). She believes dual language programs promote higher levels of cognition and richer social relationships with peers and families.

Allan Paivio was a Professor of psychology at the University of Western Ontario. Paivio has published approximately two hundred articles and is most known for his Dual Coding Theory. He believed that people learn in two distinct fashions: by processing information visually and verbally. Dual Coding Theory states there are potential abstract benefits beyond bilingualism, including a deeper understanding of the complexity of different cultures. The theory posits that nonverbal and verbal information are stored separately in long term memory. When two languages are learned at different times and in different contexts, some images may be more strongly associated with one language than the other (Jared, Poh, & Paivio, 2012).

**Statement of the Hypothesis**

To improve social relationships among students by implementing a dual language program (Mandarin and English) in a first grade classroom of 31 students over a five-week period for 45 minutes after lunch, 4 days a week in P.S. X, Brooklyn, NY.

**Method**

**Participants**

The participants are 31 first-grade students, consisting of 16 male students and 15 female students from a regular classroom in P.S. X, Brooklyn, NY. The population consists of Asian-Chinese and English-only American students.

**Instruments**

The Pre-Test will consist of a short, simple survey called “Friends Chart”. The Post-Test will consist of three parts. The first part will be the same “Friends Chart” survey, which will be used to measure and compare any change in the class. The second part will be an oral test called “Talk with Me”, used to measure how much of the foreign language they have learned. Third, there will be a student and parent(s) engaged activity called “Fun at the Supermarket” that will be assigned near the end of the program. Students will be assigned to visit a nearby supermarket in which their target language is commonly spoken. They will then need to attempt speaking in their target language with some of the other people at the supermarket. Lastly they will share their experience in class.

**Experimental Design**

**Procedure**

**Results**

**Discussion**

**Implications**

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**Appendix A**

Parents/Guardian Consent Form

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Yan Chen. I am currently a graduate student at Brooklyn College working towards my degree in Master of Science in Childhood Education. I am completing an Early Action Research Project for my class CBSE 7201, Applied Theory and Research I. I am conducting a research regarding a dual language program with the intent of measuring its influence on social relationships among 1st graders. I am requesting your permission to use your child’s data for my action research project. All instruction will take place after lunch, 4 times a week for a five-week period. I will implement a dual language program into the classroom.

All data and information will be kept confidential and anonymous. The name of school will not be identified as well. I will be happy to share the result of this research with you. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me at Cherry25chen@gmail.com. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Yan Chen

I give my child \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_permission to be part of the action research study.

Parent’s/Guardian’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B**

Principle Consent Form

Dear Principle,

My name is Yan Chen. I am currently a graduate student at Brooklyn College working towards my degree in Master of Science in Childhood Education. I am completing an Early Action Research Project for my class CBSE 7201, Applied Theory and Research I. I am conducting a research regarding a dual language program with the intent of measuring its influence on social relationships among 1st graders. I am requesting your permission to use your students’ data for my action research project. All instruction will take place after lunch, 4 times a week for a five-week period. I will implement a dual language program into the classroom.

All data and information will be kept confidential and anonymous. The name of school will not be identified as well. I will be happy to share the result of this research with you. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me at Cherry25chen@gmail.com. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Yan Chen

I give the student \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_permission to be part of the action research study.

Principle’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix C**

Teacher Consent Form

Dear Teacher,

My name is Yan Chen. I am currently a graduate student at Brooklyn College working towards my degree in Master of Science in Childhood Education. I am completing an Early Action Research Project for my class CBSE 7201, Applied Theory and Research I. I am conducting a research regarding a dual language program with the intent of measuring its influence on social relationships among 1st graders. I am requesting your permission to use your class for my action research project. All instruction will take place after lunch, 4 times a week for a five-week period. I will implement a dual language program into the classroom.

All data and information will be kept confidential and anonymous. The name of school will not be identified as well. I will be happy to share the result of this research with you. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me at Cherry25chen@gmail.com. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Yan Chen

I give the student \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_permission to be part of the action research study.

Teacher’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix D**

Friends Charts

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How are your friendships in class?

Bad 0 1 2 3 4 5 Good

How are your friendships in class with students who speak a different language or are from a different country?

Bad 0 1 2 3 4 5 Good

How much do you like or dislike classmates that speak a different language or are from a different country?

Dislike 0 1 2 3 4 5 Like

How do you feel about making new friends?

Dislike 0 1 2 3 4 5 Like

Do you want to be friends with classmates who speak a different language or are from a different county?

Don’t Want 0 1 2 3 4 5 Want

Please write down or tell me the names of your friends.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Can you tell me what you think will happen if you try to talk with your classmates who speak a different language or are from a different country?

**Appendix E**

Talk with Me

Oral language test will be answered in the students’ target language, either Chinese or English:

1. Do you like learning Chinese/English?
2. Can you introduce yourself in Chinese/English?
3. How to say “hello” “classroom” “teacher” “friend” “face” “mouth” “eye” “head” “hand” “book” in Chinese/English?
4. Do you know more Chinese/English words? Can you tell me?

**Appendix F**

Fun at the Supermarket

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Direction: Go to a supermarket where people speak mostly Chinese with your family, and talk with them in Chinese. Try to talk as much as you can, at least one or two minutes. Be prepared to share experience in class.



Fun at the Supermarket

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Direction: Go to a supermarket where people speak mostly English with your family, and talk with them in English. Try to talk as much as you can, at least one or two minutes. Be prepared to share experience in class.

